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NRLN is a coalition of 30 Retiree Associations advocating the rights of more than 2 million American retirees from...

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May 1, 2011

The Honorable Herb Kohl, Chairman
 Special Committee On Aging
 United States Senate
 330 Hart Senate Office Building
 Washington, DC 20510-4903

Dear Senator Kohl:

On behalf of the more than 2 million retirees represented by the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN), I want to commend you for sponsoring S. 27, the Preserve Access to Affordable Generics Act. Your bill would do a great deal to enhance competition in America's pharmaceutical market by stopping anticompetitive agreements between brand name and generic drug manufactures. The NRLN believes as you do that increased competition among drug makers will help reverse the upward spiral in the cost of medicine for America's consumers—especially retirees living on modest incomes.

The NRLN has long been an advocate for preventing drug companies from contracting with generic drug manufacturers to inhibit competition in the marketplace. I communicated this when two of your Wisconsin constituents, Bill Simmons and Bob Wincek, and I met in January with your staff members, Kara Getz and Ashley Carson. They have been very responsive to our concerns and we continue to communicate with them about these issues.

I know your bill has been referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Recently, NRLN Grassroots Network members who are constituents of members of the Judiciary Committee wrote to their Senators asking them to support passage of S. 27 out of the Judiciary Committee and vote for passage of the bill on Senate floor. As a member of the Judiciary Committee, your staff may have called to your attention the email messages from your Wisconsin constituents in support of S. 27.

In addition, NRLN members emailed to you and all members of Congress last month letters urging support of S. 27, along with S. 44, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation Act of 2011, and S. 319, the Pharmaceutical Market Access and Drug Safety Act of 2011. S.44, introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar, is pending in the Senate Finance Committee. S. 319, introduced by Olympia Snowe, is pending in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions. We are pleased that you are a co-sponsor of S. 319 and urge you to also become a co-sponsor of S. 44.

As you can appreciate as Chairman of the Special Committee on Aging, older Americans are fed up with rising pharmaceutical costs. The health care bill passed last year didn't—and won't—fix this if the pharmaceutical companies are allowed to continue to engage in anticompetitive practices and inflict higher prescription drug prices on consumers. These three pieces of legislation would most directly address the problem by allowing seniors to have greater access to vital pharmaceutical drugs by having greater control as consumers over costs.

(More)

On behalf of NRLN members, my staff and I stand ready to assist you in this effort in every possible way. We welcome any suggestions you might offer on how the NRLN can be of further help to gain support for S. 27. Marta Bascom, the NRLN's Executive Director in Washington, D.C. can be reached by phone at 703-863-9611 or via email at marta.bascom@linkspace.net .

Your sponsorship of S. 27 and S. 319 is greatly appreciated and we'll also be grateful for your support of S. 44. Enactment of these three bills would result in savings for Americans, and reduce the cost of health care and Medicare without adding to the budget deficit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Kadereit". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Bill Kadereit, President

National Retiree Legislative Network